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Investing in tobacco prevention programs pays off

by Joy Hamilton

Tobacco control programs play a crucial role in the prevention of many chronic conditions such as cancer, heart disease and respiratory illness. Comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation programs prevent kids from starting to smoke; help adult smokers quit; educate the public, the media and policymakers about ways to reduce tobacco use; address disparities; and serve as a counter to the ever-present tobacco industry.

When adequately funded, comprehensive tobacco prevention programs quickly and substantially reduce tobacco use, which saves lives and money, cutting smoking-cause medical costs and lost productivity. The effectiveness of these programs becomes abundantly clear when funding disappears. States that have experimented with tobacco prevention funding cuts have seen their progress in reducing tobacco use erode, resulting in higher smoking rates and associated deaths, disease, and costs.

Massachusetts and Indiana are interesting case studies for this. Unfortunately, similar results can be found in many other states including Minnesota, Florida, and California.

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Public Health
Seattle & King County 

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(Continued)**MASSACHUSETTS**

For years, Massachusetts was a leader in tobacco prevention. The successful statewide program resulted in declines in cigarette consumption at rates significantly greater than the nation as a whole. Despite this success, in 2004 funding for the state's tobacco prevention program was cut by 95 percent.

The drastic reduction in funding has taken its toll — studies show that in 2005 and 2006, cigarette consumption actually increased in Massachusetts, just one to two years after funding was cut.

INDIANA

In 2000, Indiana implemented a comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation program with revenue from the state's tobacco settlement. The Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation (ITPC) program contributed to significant declines in smoking among both adults and youth, but in 2004, state leaders cut the program's funding by almost 70 percent. Subsequently, Indiana's progress in reducing smoking rates stalled for both adults and youth.

WASHINGTON

Washington state's adult smoking rate is the third lowest in the nation (14.8 percent), largely due to our Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, which was started in 2000. Since the Program began, the smoking rate declined by about a third. However Washington state's Tobacco Prevention and Control Account has been reduced by more than 50 percent over the last two years. In the recent special legislative session called by Governor Gregoire, the Program suffered an additional cut of \$3 million. Governor Gregoire has proposed that Washington state eliminate funding for comprehensive tobacco prevention and control on July 1, 2011. Cutting funding to tobacco prevention may not spell the savings she expects though — a recent report from the Department of Health credited the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program for saving five dollars in health care costs for every one dollar spent for the Program. Based on data from other states, it's likely that the progress seen in our state to reduce tobacco use rates will erode, rates of smoking may raise and associated health costs will skyrocket due to these cuts.

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New products and marketing threaten tobacco control and prevention successes

by Molly Ryan

If I've learned one thing for certain during my time in tobacco prevention and control, it's that the fight against tobacco is never over. We have made great strides in reducing the burden of tobacco on our community. Over the past decade, we have decreased the overall smoking rate, reduced youth initiation, and increased protection against deadly secondhand smoke. But the tobacco industry is an ever-present threat because our success means their failure (and vice versa). When we get people to quit or prevent people from starting, we are essentially taking away their customers, and when they keep customers and/or gain new ones, we see bad health outcomes. So, for both sides of this battle, there is a lot to be gained and even more to be lost. Because of this, it comes at no surprise that as we continue to successfully reduce tobacco use rates, tobacco companies are working harder than ever to recruit and retain customers. This effort to counter tobacco prevention and control successes is very clearly demonstrated by the emergence of new products and reinvigorated marketing efforts.

NEW PRODUCTS

With increasingly tighter smoking restrictions and subsequent reduction in smoking rates (and cigarette sales), the tobacco industry has responded by introducing new products to fill that market niche.

Electronic cigarettes, or "e-cigarettes," are currently a hot topic of discussion. There is limited research about the safety of these products and initial testing by the FDA raises some concerns. Ingredient testing on several samples shows the presence of various toxins and carcinogens (chemicals that cause cancer), a discrepancy in nicotine levels among cartridges with the same label (e.g., "low," "medium"), and low levels of nicotine among all but one of the cartridges that were labeled as containing no nicotine. In addition to this apparent lack of quality control and evidence to show these products are safe, public health officials are concerned over the potential appeal that these products may have to youth. Their

high-tech design, easy availability online or at mall kiosks, lack of health warnings and the wide array of flavors, including chocolate, vanilla and mint, may encourage young people to try these products and potentially get them addicted to nicotine. The King County Board of Health recently passed a regulation prohibiting the sale of e-cigarettes to youth.

While manufacturers for e-cigarettes seemingly appeared out of the woodwork to fill the market niche that smoking restrictions created, cigarette manufacturers like Philip Morris (Marlboro) and R.J. Reynolds (Camel) have responded by introducing smokeless, spitless tobacco products that can be used in situations and settings where smoking or using spit tobacco is not allowed. As described in our spring 2010 newsletter, there is some debate over whether Snus is a friend or foe of tobacco prevention and control — some believe that it could be a safe alternative to cigarettes, but many believe this is yet another attempt by American tobacco companies to expand their market share. Many public health officials are concerned that Snus is a "gateway product" that is meant to get people addicted to nicotine so that they will graduate to products with higher nicotine content, like cigarettes. Snus is especially appealing to young people, who already use smokeless tobacco at higher rates than adults, because it can be used discreetly and comes in a variety of flavors and nicotine levels.

NEW MARKETING

Since the vast majority of regular adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18, it comes as no surprise that tobacco companies invest millions of dollars to market their products to young people. Youth are particularly vulnerable to tobacco marketing; research has shown a causal relationship between exposure to tobacco marketing and likelihood of using tobacco. The more cigarette ads and promotions a young person sees, the more likely they are to start smoking.

Cigarette companies have been hugely successful in recruiting new, young customers by bombarding them with advertisements and marketing materials that promote positive opinions and attitudes towards smoking and smokers. Despite the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) aimed to restrict marketing directly to kids and the disappearance of billboards and t-shirts adorned with images of Joe Camel, tobacco companies are still reaching kids.

The most recent example of this is the "Break Free Adventure," Camel's new marketing campaign which includes the release of special-edition packs of cigarettes that feature 10 cities across the U.S., including Seattle. This campaign

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exploits Seattle's vibrant and alternative culture in an attempt to make Camel cigarettes appear cool, fun and rebellious — themes that resonate with youth.

Many tobacco prevention and control groups and organizations, including the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and the National Association of Attorney Generals, as well as elected officials, are outraged by this campaign and are demanding that R.J. Reynolds (RJR), makers of Camel cigarettes, end this promotion immediately. In their statement, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids describes this campaign as evidence that RJR "has not changed" and "is continuing its longstanding efforts to make the Camel brand appealing to youth." In a letter sent directly to RJR, the National Association of Attorney Generals asks that the campaign be terminated immediately "out of concern for America's youth."

Local and state officials also voiced opposition to this campaign. Governor Christine Gregoire released a statement calling on RJR to "halt their cynical campaign and not use our local landmarks for their gain." Other political leaders including King County Executive Dow Constantine and Board of Health chair Julia Patterson also released statements echoing these sentiments.

"We've cut the smoking rate in half in just the last decade in King County, and it has proved its worth in lives and money saved. We can't take a step backward by allowing predatory marketing campaigns to lure kids into tobacco addiction." — King County Board of Health Chair Julia Patterson

CLOSING

By their own admission, the tobacco industry see young people as the key to their company's future success — they represent the next generation of smokers (and customers). Because of this, it comes as no surprise that tobacco companies continue to target young people with their product development and marketing campaigns.

Check out previous newsletter articles on this topic: [Snus: Safe alternative to smoking?](#) and [The cigarette E-volves \(electronic cigarettes\).](#)

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Exposure to tobacco smoke causes immediate damage, says new Surgeon General's report

by Joy Hamilton

A new report from the Surgeon General finds that exposure to tobacco smoke — even occasional smoking or secondhand smoke — causes immediate damage to your body that can lead to serious illness or death. The report, titled *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease*, provides scientific evidence of the importance of smoke free air and will serve as an important tool for public health advocates in their efforts to create smoke free environment policies.

Some highlights of the report include:

- Cellular damage and tissue inflammation from tobacco smoke are immediate, and that repeated exposure weakens the body's ability to heal the damage.
- The report also explains why it is so difficult to quit smoking. According to the research, cigarettes are designed for addiction. The design and contents of current tobacco products make them more attractive and addictive than ever before. Today's cigarettes deliver nicotine more quickly and efficiently than cigarettes of many years ago.
- Tobacco smoke contains a deadly mixture of more than 7,000 chemicals and compounds, of which hundreds are toxic and at least 70 cause cancer. Every exposure to these cancer-causing chemicals could damage

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DNA in a way that leads to cancer.

- Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can cause cardiovascular disease and could trigger acute cardiac events, such as heart attack. The report describes how chemicals from tobacco smoke quickly damage blood vessels and make blood more likely to clot.
- The evidence in this report shows how smoking causes cardiovascular disease and increases risks for heart attack, stroke, and aortic aneurysm.

This report is the 30th tobacco-related Surgeon General's report issued since 1964. The full report, along with several other resources such as a consumer booklet and a clinician fact sheet, can be found on the [CDC's website](#).

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Healthy tobacco-free environments

by Karen Brawley, Norilyn de la Pena, Lindsey Greto, and Paul Zemann

Everyone deserves a healthy environment and in our county, we want the healthy choice to be the easy choice. All-inclusive tobacco-free policies protect nonsmokers from dangerous secondhand smoke (SHS), support people who are actively trying to quit tobacco, and keep youth away from tobacco products.



Tobacco-free environments protect the health, safety, and welfare of all community members and establish the norm that tobacco use is not an acceptable behavior for young people or adults. Kids can't imitate what they don't see — keeping tobacco products out of sight also keeps it out of mind.

Through King County's [Communities Putting Prevention to Work](#) efforts, there are a number of new projects working on healthy, smoke-free environments. More about their work can be found in the links below.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Young adulthood, considered to be ages 18-24, is a time of transition from adolescence to adulthood when young people are faced with new freedoms, experiences and responsibilities. This is a critical time in which tobacco

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addictions are either established or squashed; although many smokers start smoking before the age of 18, the majority don't actually become addicted (i.e., "established" smokers) until they are between 18 and 24. Tobacco companies take full advantage of this fact by aggressively marketing their products to this vulnerable age group, particularly college students — an effective strategy that encourages smoking. Considering this, it is no surprise that the smoking rate among young adults is higher than any other age group.

Colleges and universities are uniquely positioned to be able to combat the tobacco industry's efforts to promote smoking among young adults. Strong smoke-free campus policies create smoke-free social norms, discourage tobacco use, and also protect people from deadly SHS — ultimately improving the health and well-being of students, staff, faculty and visitors.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the work Cornish College of the Arts is doing to become a smoke-free campus.

HOSPITALS AND SPECIALIZED CLINICS

Walking through a cloud of smoke on the way to a doctor's visit, a surgery or a group counseling session is antithetical to the mission of health-care organizations. Tobacco-free hospital and clinic environments protect patients, staff and visitors from the negative health effects of tobacco use.

It's well-known that tobacco use adversely impacts medical treatment for most illnesses. Smoking slows wound healing and is the most common cause of poor birth outcomes. SHS is dangerous for anyone to breathe, but is especially problematic for sick patients or those with compromised immune systems.

By instituting a strong tobacco-free policy at places of health, organizations can demonstrate a strong commitment to health and safety.

[The University of Washington](#) and [King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services](#) are working to create smoke-free hospital and clinic environments in King County.

HOUSING

While Washington's smoke-free workplace laws protect workers from SHS exposure, no laws protect people from SHS where they live.

Reducing exposure to SHS in multi-family units is vital to creating a healthier

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environment for all residents. Smoke drifting from smokers' apartments to those of non-smokers forces residents to breathe in the carcinogens found in SHS.

Children and those with long-term health conditions are susceptible to a host of health problems from SHS, including: sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory problems, ear infections, asthma attacks, heart disease and a variety of cancers.

Tobacco-free housing also provides a financial incentive. As a result of residual chemical residue, extensive cleaning is required to maintain the value and cleanliness of a smoking home. Having tobacco-free housing also lowers the risk of fires. Cigarettes are a leading cause of residential building fires and are the leading reason for fire death in the United States.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the work Housing Resource Group is doing to implement smoke-free housing policies in at least 26 affordable housing buildings in Seattle.

PARKS

Parks are established to promote healthy activities. The purpose of park areas is to promote community wellness, and tobacco-free policies fit with this idea. Secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted. Furthermore, cigarette litter is dangerous. When discarded, cigarettes can pollute the land and water and may be ingested by toddlers, pets, birds or fish.

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Every day in the United States, about 4,100 youth between the ages of 12 and 17 try a cigarette for the first time. Of the youth who take up smoking, about one in three will eventually die from a tobacco-related disease.

Youth cigarette use declined sharply from 1997 — 2003, but in recent years the decline has stalled and the rate of smokeless product usage has increased. In King County, 17.3 percent of high school seniors report current cigarette use, and more youth use smokeless tobacco than adults.

Tobacco companies can no longer overtly market their products to youth, but instead use covert marketing techniques, such as production of youth-friendly products, advertisements in magazines with high youth readership and tobacco industry sponsorship of recreation events. Nearly 80% of adult smokers started before the age of 18.

Products that are especially appealing to youth include flavored smokeless tobacco. These products are easily concealed from parents and teachers and often come in candy-like flavors. Tobacco industry documents show that flavored products have historically been aggressively marketed to attract new, young users, who then graduate to non-flavored products in adulthood.

Not only can experimentation with tobacco products in adolescence result in a lifelong addiction, it's also related to poor academic performance and other high-risk behaviors.

Healthy students are more prepared to learn. Students with certain health risk

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factors, including tobacco use, have worse outcomes in school. Students that use tobacco are:

- 3 times more likely to get Cs/Ds/Fs
- 4 times more likely to skip class
- 21 times more likely to use marijuana
- 4 times more likely to be suspended
- 8 times more likely to binge drink
- 36 times more likely to use drugs

However reducing student tobacco use improves graduation rates, increases seat times for students, improves classroom management, improves test scores, improves learning disparities, and increases personal success. These alarming statistics underscore the need for effective youth tobacco prevention programs.

To request a full list of references for this article, please contact Lauren Holt at Lauren.Holt@kingcounty.gov.

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Board of Health approves electronic cigarette regulations

by Joy Hamilton

The King County Board of Health recently passed regulations to protect King County youth from electronic smoking devices and unregulated nicotine delivery products.

The Board of Health voted unanimously to:

- restrict the sales of e-cigarettes or any other unapproved nicotine delivery products to people 18 and older;
- prohibit free or highly discounted electronic smoking devices or unapproved nicotine delivery products;
- prohibit the use of e-cigarette devices in places where smoking is prohibited by law.

Electronic smoking devices, commonly known as "e-cigarettes," are battery-operated devices designed to look like and to be used in the same manner as conventional cigarettes. E-cigarettes use cartridges to deliver vaporized nicotine,

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the same highly addictive drug that's in tobacco. The FDA is investigating e-cigarettes, but the products are currently unregulated at the federal level.

E-cigarettes have a high appeal to youth. They are sold in convenience stores and mall kiosks and come in candy flavors including chocolate, vanilla and mint. The FDA has warned that e-cigarettes can increase nicotine addiction among young people and may lead youth to try conventional tobacco products.

As these products have become more widely available, public use has also increased. E-cigarettes mimic the appearance of regular cigarettes because the user exhales a smoke-like vapor similar in appearance to the exhaled smoke from a cigarette. Their use is visually indistinguishable from the use of traditional tobacco products in public, which leads to confusion and may prompt people to smoke traditional tobacco products.

In passing the regulation, Board of Health members also expressed concern that the use of these products threatens to undermine the social norming impact of Smoking in Public Places law.

Several other jurisdictions across the United States have created similar regulations related to e-cigarettes, but King County's regulations are believed to be the most comprehensive in the nation.